MEDICAL SOCIETY HOLDS PANEL DISCUSSION

Opinions Differ on Sterilization Issue

What are the legal implications of sterilization? Who has the right to volunteer? Who determines whether a person is capable of making a decision?

These were some of the questions a panel of eight medical doctors, psychiatrists and legal experts attempted to answer at an all-day assembly of the Pennsylvania Medical Society.

ANSWERS DIVERGENT

The answers were as divergent as the backgrounds of the panelists confirming the opinion of Dr. Paul Poinsard, president of the Pa. Psychiatriac Society, that "eugenic sterilization is too controversial and too complex to rush into."

Pennsylvania, it was pointed out, does not have a law on the books pertaining to the sterilization of the mentally retarded, and many doctors are undecided on the issue.

The panelists at the Host Corral, where 75 psychiatrists and nurses listened to the speakers, raised a number of interesting questions.

"All agree that the ultimate aim is improvement of the human race." said Dr. George Tarjan, secretary of the American Psychiatric Association and Program Director of the Mental Retardation, Neuropsychiatric Institute in Los Angeles, "but what is a 'better' man?

Too often, said Dr. Targan, a 'better' man "is determined by tests which show higher intelligence. Does this make a person 'better'?"

Dr. Frank Ayd Jr., a Catholic psychiatrist and editor of the Medical-Moral Newsletter, charged that sterilization is a tool of the social engineers. "Who shall judge (who is to be sterilized)? Should I judge my fellow man inferior because he is not so well endowed?"

Dr. Alyce Mcl. C. Gullattee, medical officer in psychiatry of St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington. D.C., said: "Eugenics, the idea of improving mankind by selective breeding, is nothing but another name for racism."

Two of the speakers were advocates of sterilization.

Dr. Alan F. Guttmacher, president of Planned Parenthood, said he favored sterilization "in cases of gross mental subnormality."

Dr. Guttmacher said, however, "I am lukewarm on eugenic sterilization."

He said he favored sterilization "not because we fear women will transmit mental retardation, but on the inability of this young woman to cope with a family and give a family a proper environment."

Mrs. Mendora Bass, consultant for the Association for Voluntary Sterilization, "believes a woman has the right to be sterilized if she chooses."

Man Held in Death During Argument

PITTSBURGH (AP) — A Northside man who claims he shot a neighbor in self-defense during a political argument Nov. 3, election day, has been ordered to face a grand jury on an involuntary manslaughter charge.

The defendant, Gus Jordan, 69, said at a coroner's hearing Wednesday 59-year-old Nelson Reed attacked him with a knife because Jordan refused to vote for a certain candidate and that he shot Reed in protecting himself.